

REMARKS

The Official Action mailed April 23, 2004, has been received and its contents carefully noted. This response is filed within three months of the mailing date of the Official Action and therefore is believed to be timely without extension of time. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that this response is being timely filed.

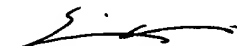
The Applicants note with appreciation the consideration of the Information Disclosure Statement filed on May 13, 1999.

Claims 1-7, 10, 11, 25-41, and 43-46 were pending in the present application prior to the above amendment. Rejected claims 1-4 have been canceled and the Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of the remaining claims 5-7, 10, 11, 25-41, and 43-46. Accordingly, allowed claims 5-7, 10, 11, 25-41, and 43-46 are now pending in the present application, of which claims 5, 10, 25, 27, 31, 37, 38, and 41 are independent. For the reasons set forth in detail below, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Paragraph 2 of the Official Action rejects claims 1-4 as obvious based on the combination of JP 07-230101 to Masaya et al. and U.S. Patent No. 6,249,327 to Murade et al., and U.S. Patent No. 6,084,647 to Hatano et al. In response to this rejection, Applicant has canceled claims 1-4. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all claims of the present invention are in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,


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